

From: Dellinger, Philip
Sent: Friday, June 05, 2015 9:31 AM
To: R6 6WQ-SG;Bates, William
Subject: FW: Earthquakes will take center stage today at Railroad Commission meeting

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From: Casso, Ruben
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To: Dellinger, Philip
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Earthquakes will take center stage today at Railroad Commission meeting

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[Nicholas Sakelaris](#)

Dallas Business Journal

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The [Texas Railroad Commission](#) and researchers from several universities will dig into the Azle earthquake issue today in Austin.

They will [focus on the Southern Methodist University study](#) entitled “Casual Factors for seismicity near Azle, Texas,” which linked the flurry of seismic activity in that area to a pair of disposal wells.

The 9 a.m. meeting, [which will be streamed live from the commission’s website](#), will be a precursor to the upcoming hearings where the operators of those disposal wells will have to prove they didn’t cause the earthquakes.

[XTO Energy](#) will have its hearing on June 10-11. The Fort Worth company is a subsidiary of Irving-based Exxon Mobil Corp. (NYSE: XOM).

EnerVest Operating’s hearing is set for June 15-16.

These hearing are unprecedented for Texas, marking the first time an energy company could be [held accountable for human induced seismicity](#).

Azle and surrounding communities northwest of Fort Worth [experienced about 30 earthquakes from November 2013 to January 2014](#). Residents gave the commission an earful, placing the blame squarely on the disposal wells, which oil and gas companies use to dispose of brine and frack water from nearby Barnett Shale operations.

The commission approved tougher rules, giving itself the authority to shut down wells found to be causing earthquakes. It also keeps closer tabs on the pressures and volumes that companies inject into wells after there's been a spike in earthquake events.

Today's hearing will be led by Commissioner [Ryan Sitton](#), who was elected to the RRC in November. Craig Pearson, the commission's seismologist, will also be in attendance.

The goal is to understand the nature of the SMU study, explore what additional data should be collected, what else should be required of operators and what new regulations are needed.

Last month, the commission used its authority to temporarily shut down five disposal wells within a 100-square-mile radius of the epicenter of the 4.0 magnitude Venus earthquake.

The wells were shut down so the commission could inspect them.

The oil and gas industry disputes the findings of the SMU study, saying it's unlikely that such low pressure changes could induce an earthquake.